



VERIS RFP Project Site Visit and Interview Notes

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General Information

Voter registration

Methods

Voters can register in a number of different ways. Registrations can be:

- in-person;
- online;
- by mail;
- through the DMV; and,
- through voter drives through 3rd parties (e.g. Next Gen, League of Women Voters, Virginia Organizing, NAACP).

Third-parties that register voters online through their own applications—the applications are connected to VERIS through an application programming interface (API)—become DMV Hopper records, but the records are flagged as third-party registrations.

Voter behaviors

Third-party voter drives generate a large number of new voter registrations, which result in a number of incomplete applications. For example, some students will omit their social security number (SSN) on the application because they sometimes don't know it—as registering to vote may have been the first time they've been required provide it—and have to call their parents. Some General Registrars (GR) stated that some voters are afraid to give their SSN to drive organizers. If the third-parties collect email and phone numbers, these pieces of information help the GRs resolve incomplete registrations by allowing them to speak directly to the registrant.

Age-based eligibility

Some applicants will attempt to register, but are too young. System will flag any voter who is under eighteen, but the calendar math must be done by the clerk. If the voter is not eighteen by next general election, voters will be rejected. The GRs would appreciate some help from VERIS on calculating eligibility dates.

Voter identification cards

To get a voter photo identification card, the person has to be registered (NB: if newly registered, there's a 5 business day waiting period). The application to generate photo ids lives outside of VERIS. Now that the post office is slower, one GR noted that they need to make waiting period longer.



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In-state university students

If a local university student is registered in another locality in Virginia, they cannot vote in the university's locality if the registration deadline is passed. The voter can re-register if before the deadline or, if the absentee deadline is still open, they will show the voter how to vote absentee in their home locality.

Other issues

- How do voters bypass the address check to enter an out-of-state residential address? Most of these records come through the DMV.
- Why should GRs need to process these records?
- Is the scanned copy in VERIS the official copy?
 - Hard copies were useful when VERIS went down (pre-2010)
- GRs make ultimate determination of validity of registration; the system doesn't help.

Hopper processing

The hopper and the batch are two different things. When you click on the total number of items to process, that brings the user to the batch. Going through and clicking the magnifying glass on each batch line will bring up the full record. After checking all information, the GR goes back to the hopper and processes all the applications (i.e. process the records in VERIS, batch generate letters, print letters). For 86 records, it can be 3-4 hours of time. One GR indicated that she would like to access the same information from both the hopper or batch views.

Some of the form letters have space to add comments for rejections. Some don't. The GRs would like to change the information on some of the letters, including the framing language.

Hopper management

Some VERIS users may want to finish processing all hopper records by moving to the next record in the hopper—or by going back to the current hopper list screen—but some users like the current behavior as they may need to be at the home screen to perform a completely different process.

DMV Hopper

The DMV Hopper was down 3 times in the last 30 days due to a "network issue," which was never fully explained.



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List maintenance

On Wednesday, the locals receive a weekly round-up of duplicates, out-of-state movers, mentally incapacitated. ERIC information is provided by ELECT in an Excel document that is used to manually update the voter records. Courts (e.g. circuit courts) notify via paper instead of via the hopper.

Duplicates

The duplicate report from the DMV generates two duplicates: the administrative duplicate and the duplicate. The GRs would like to know why there are two duplicate records that are also duplicates.

Election management

Polling locations

Polling location changes are often received through email. Polling location changes happen after the County Attorney sends an ordinance, once the county supervisors have approved the change. In the case of an emergency change, backup locations are already in place and ordained and can be immediately activated.

To publicize these emergency changes, they are pushed out to their website, radio, social media, and other outlets. When a change happens, these locations are not updated in VERIS. When asked if this affects the state polling location lookup or the data published through the Voting Information Project (VIP), the GRs didn't know.

Ballot styles

Since VERIS has all the necessary information to do this, it should associate ballot styles with voters. Some GRs are currently using ePollbooks to manage this association.

Electronic pollbooks

In order to set up the pollbook, the GRs export the street file and alpha list from VERIS and then merge ballot style data into a spreadsheet. That file is sent to the vendor, who then configures the pollbooks.

Redistricting/precinct management

GIS integration would help so much with redistricting. Management of street segments through VERIS is burdensome. The GIS manager sends an excel spreadsheet with the street segments that have changed districts. The manual addition of street segments is difficult to do and describe. Some GRs wish GIS was integrated with VERIS.



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Security

No-excuse absentee

The GRs are concerned about the implications of the new no-excuse absentee law, which wipes out the excuse for the 7-day period before the election.¹ The main concerns revolve around logistics, specifically, where will processing happens and the current parking capacity for their current office, which they believe will not serve the possible influx of people.

Emails

GRs did receive a phishing email requesting information about a voter's family from the voter's email address. Unclear if the voter's email was hacked, spoofed, or the voter actually sent the email.

County IT

The GRs speak highly of their county IT. The GR office receives trainings from the IT department. One employee did have an email issue that took a week-long resolution period. The county is currently on Windows 8.

Data sources

These are the sources of data changes to VERIS.

Voter registration

These data sources include new voter registrations and existing voter record modifications and cancelations.

Source	Paper	Electronic	Frequency
Department of Social Services ²	X		Every Friday
DMV		X	Live
Department of Vital Statistics ³		X	Unknown
National Change of Address (NCOA) ⁴		X	Unknown

¹ These 7-days are the only no-excuse period. Starting 45 days before the election and before the 7-day period still requires an excuse to vote absentee.

² GRs are more careful about the applications as more felons apply through this agency.

³ This is the death information for cancellations. It's not clear how this information gets into VERIS. It's unclear if it an inter-agency data connection or it is added manually by Garry Ellis.

⁴ There are a lot of questions about this process. For example, a local voter updated their mailing address to a PO Box. That change ended up as their registration address for their voter record and an in-house dependent registered at the same address. There should be safeguards in the system to prevent this from happening.



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Citizen Portal ⁵		X	Constant
Third-party voter drives	X	X	Around an election
Voters ⁶	X		Constant
Newspaper obituaries ⁷	X		Regular
Courts ⁸	X	X ⁹	Unknown
NVRA form ¹⁰	X		Unknown
ELECT ¹¹	X		Every Wednesday

Other voter activities

Voters can also perform other activities that affect VERIS. They can turn in an absentee ballot, request a photo ID, return the oath form in the Officer of Elections¹² packet, and submit petitions.

Candidates

Candidates affect VERIS data by submitting candidate declarations forms and candidate petitions.

Election night reporting

Entering information

The Chief Officer calls with the results. Depending on the size of the results table, it's often difficult to enter the information into VERIS, since the headers do not stay fixed to the table as user scrolls down the page. In order to ensure the right data is being entered into the correct input field, the user has to scroll back-and-forth.

⁵ While the Citizen portal does generate electronic records, it does allow incomplete registrations and absentee requests that require a paper application. The Paper hopper records that these processes generate are completely ignored.

⁶ These changes include the restoration of rights, name changes with court order, absentee applications, and death certificates. The latter is presented when a family member dies and the family wants to ensure they are removed from the rolls.

⁷ If obituaries are found matching existing voters, the GRs ensure the dates of birth match.

⁸ This includes mentally-incapacitated and felon status, and name changes.

⁹ There was exactly one instance when the mentally incapacitated list ended up in the hopper. The GRs would like to know what happened and why it stopped, specifically because it was easier to have the updates as electronic records.

¹⁰ The GRs dislike this form as it is too generic and many voters fail to provide Virginia-specific information.

¹¹ The GRs receive paper information in a Wednesday packet from ELECT. These documents include voter registrations, NCOA, out-of-state moves, mentally-incapacitated, absentee ballot requests. They wonder why some of this information is duplicated.

¹² The Officer of Elections is the title of the pollworker.



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Reporting

Paper pollbook and final absentee list

The paper pollbooks and final absentee lists are currently sorted alphabetically by ballot style and the GRs find using it extremely inefficient. The GRs would rather it be sorted alphabetically by precinct.

Proof of registration

Some voters ask for “proof” that they are registered, which is currently accomplished via taking screenshots of VERIS.

Document scanning

Bugs

The scans won’t save for certain file types or categories.

Universality

Scanning is optional right now, but this lack of enforcement makes it harder for everyone using the system. For records that lack scanned in alpha cards, GRs must contact other locality to get info.

Addresses

Address verification

The address verification functionality is a source of frustration. Sometimes an address is valid, but address validator will make the GR override it every time. The system should remember the address provided by the GR as an override, rather than flagging it as an error every time, especially if it happens more than once.

Bad addresses

Out-of-state addresses can appear in VERIS hoppers, especially if the data comes from the DMV.

General comments

Timeout issues

The VERIS session timeout seems arbitrary and the 2FA process is onerous. If the user was in the middle of something when kicked out, their work can be lost.



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Search

VERIS sometimes arbitrarily holds onto data and repopulates it into the search fields. The GRs are unsure why this happens and whether it was supposed to be a convenience feature. However, if it was, it seems to be incorrectly implemented and can cause searches to error out if the user doesn't immediately notice the additional information.

Liaisons

The liaison system has worked great and the GRs have a great relationship with their liaison. GRs would prefer the liaisons to communicate changes to VERIS as soon as they know a change is going to happen. The mentally incapacitated changes were originally provided on paper. Without explanation, they began to appear in the hopper instead of paper. This lasted for a short time, and then inexplicably returned to paper delivery from the courts. When they asked ELECT about the change, the response was, essentially, "enter it in."

Officers of Election

VERIS should handle location assignment and payroll. Since VERIS has the ability to generate correspondences, it would also be useful for VERIS to create form letters to send to the eventual officers.

Post-election House and Senate breakdown

The GRs have 7 days to provide the breakdown, but they provide the breakdown the next day. It would be useful if VERIS provided the breakdown.

No-excuse absentee tracking

GRs are wondering how they'll track voters without an application, especially in satellite locations where multiple votes are possible.

Reduce the paper

Since there is a greater ease for processing data electronically within VERIS, ELECT should figure out more ways to electronically transfer information into VERIS, especially through inter-agency agreements and cooperation.

Flood of transactions on deadlines

Voter registration and absentee request deadlines see a surge of requests on the final day making the need for these processes to be fast and simple infinitely more important.



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VVRS vs VERIS

After the VERIS changeover in 2004, all voters lost all prior voting history. If there ELECT develops a new system, all voter data should be migrated.